

THE STATUS REPORT

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MCSW Honors Eight Unsung Heroines of Massachusetts

Women Who Don't Make the News, But Make the Difference!



Unsung Heroines: Posing with their awards are: rear from left, Stephanie Wilson, Joan Keochakian, Shella Vitale, Nancy Schneider and Enith Levine; front from left, Lily Tu, Emily Felix and Elaine Kirby

On March 22, 2006, the MCSW named and honored eight Unsung Heroines of Massachusetts at a luncheon at the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston. Unsung Heroines are women who use their time, talent, spirit and enthusiasm to enrich the lives of others. They are mentors, volunteers, innovators and the glue that keeps a community together.

Over 450 people attended the luncheon to celebrate the eight honorees.

"These women have worked quietly, diligently and without fanfare to make a difference in their communities and organizations," acknowledged Linda Brantley, MCSW Executive Director. "We are tremendously proud of them."

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Executive Director Corner

March was a phenomenal month for the MCSW. It saw the culmination of many months of work when on March 3 we announced and celebrated 240 Community Unsung Heroines from across the Commonwealth at a reception in their honor at the State House. These are women who very quietly, behind the scenes without fanfare or recognition, are making the difference in our communities and organizations. They contribute vastly to the well-being and vitality of our economy. They see a challenge and they rise to meet it. They are faced with adversity and they find a way to overcome and grow from it. They offer lifelines to seniors, money for medical research, teach English to new citizens, preserve historical treasures and so much more. When handed lemons, they make lemonade.

It was our pleasure and a privilege to recognize their many contributions and one of our favorite moments was to see over 200 of them gathered on the Grand Staircase smiling as the moment was preserved forever. It is a visual that we will not soon forget, and a testament that we can all make a difference if we choose to do so. And we are sure that these incredible role models are only the tip of the iceberg – surely there are THOUSANDS more wonderful women just like them – from the Berkshires to Cape Cod, from Lowell to New Bedford, and in every city and town in Massachusetts. I know we and many others are already looking forward to discovering and unveiling next year's Community Unsung Heroines and we will look forward to your continued assistance and participation in the process.

In other parts of this newsletter you will read about several exciting new initiatives that the MCSW will launch this spring – the MA Women's Resource and Referral Network and statewide Regional Councils, which will assist us in being better informed of the true status of women throughout Massachusetts. We welcome your involvement in either or both.

Happy Spring!



International Women's Day Celebration a Success!

Nearly 200 women attended this year's International Women's Day on March 8th at Simmons College in the Linda K. Paresky Conference Center.

The theme was *Shifting the Paradigm: Paths to Women's Political Leadership in the United States* and speakers included Linda Dorcena Forry, State Representative, 12th Suffolk District; Lida E. Harkins, State Representative, House Majority Whip; Charlotte Golar Richie, Chief of Housing, City of Boston; Mary S. Rogeness, State Representative, Assistant Minority Leader; and Dessima Williams, Sociology Professor, Brandeis and Women's Rights Activist.

Discussion focused on how women's political leadership in the U.S. can be grown, and how to pave the way to get more women elected to political offices. Also examined was why women in other countries have achieved more political gains than in the United States.

Continued from Pg. 1 *MCSW Honored 8 Statewide Unsung Heroines on March 22*

Honorees ranged in age from 16 to 84 and came from all over the state, from Cape Cod to Amherst.

Lily Tu of West Barnstable began volunteering during World War II when she taught the children of those building B-24 bombers. Lily's recent volunteering efforts include hurricane relief, RSVP, the Senior Environment Corps, the Community Corrections Center and Country Farm.

Emily Felix of Kingston is the youngest honoree. When in the fourth grade, she founded Kingston Kids Care. She spends her spare time organizing other young people to volunteer for the elderly.

Stephanie Wilson of Boston organized volunteers in order to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina. As a result, three tractor-trailer truckloads of donations were transported to the hurricane ravaged area to assist those who were not otherwise being served.

Joan Keochakian of Amherst established the first hospice service in Western MA 25 years ago. She recently created Fisher House, a home for the terminally ill.

Sheila Vitale of Marblehead, a Boston Ballet Orchestra violinist, secured donations of violins and then taught twenty-four girls at Girls Inc. of Lynn how to play them.

Enith Levine of Boston and Nancy Schneider of Needham co-founded the Boston chapter of Dress for Success, an organization that provides programs that help economically disadvantaged women acquire jobs, retain their new positions and succeed in the mainstream workplace.

Elaine Kirby of North Andover is a teacher in Peabody. She created the Industrial Arts Food Program the Young Mothers Program and a mentoring program that helps first-year teachers.

Proceeds from the luncheon will be utilized to augment and expand the ***MA Women's Resource and Referral Network***, an interactive Web based resource that puts the information that MA women and families need at their fingertips. For more information about this resource, read the article on page 4.



L-R: MCSW Commissioners Carol Pimentel and Luncheon Chair Liz Houlihan, Liz Brunner, and MCSW Commissioners Marianne Fleckner and Gloria Coney.



L-R: MCSW Executive Director Linda Brantley and Liz Brunner, co-anchor of NewsCenter 5, Luncheon Emcee.

MCSW to Launch MA Women's Resource & Referral Network

This spring, the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW) will launch the MA Women's Resource & Referral Network (MWRRN), an interactive, online database that will put information, services, agencies and organizations that Massachusetts women and their families need, at their finger tips.

Through the MCSW web site, the Network will allow users to search for what they need by geographic region and/or service or topic area either from their home computers, or in case of those without computers, at public libraries, colleges, and community centers, etc. The MCSW seeks to include local, community, regional, and statewide and in some cases federal resources and providers.

"If you can envision a woman going to our Web site, seeing a map of Massachusetts, clicking on where she lives or a radius of say 25 miles and entering the type of information she seeks – say legal resources, and up pops a list of everything that is available to her – that is what we are trying to create," explained MCSW Executive Director Linda Brantley.

One of the charges of the MCSW is to serve as a clearinghouse for information on issues pertaining to women. Linda explains the MCSW's goal with the project is to ultimately create a "one-stop-shopping" experience for women where they can go to get reliable information and referrals.

This service is in large part being made possible by the generosity of corporate sponsors such as Verizon, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Tufts Health Plan, AstraZeneca, SBLI and many others who have contributed through the MCSW's annual fundraising activity, the annual Unsung Heroines Award Luncheons.

It is anticipated that the MWRRN will be initially available to the public in late spring. Currently, the MCSW is asking service providers and organizations that serve women and girls to add themselves to the growing number of resources that will be contained within the network. The deadline for organizations to submit information to be included in the initial launch is April 26. There is no charge for this service.

The MWRRN will be continuously improved and augmented over time. After the initial launch, the MCSW will investigate and pursue ways to make this valuable resource available in different languages and to those women who may not have access to a computer or not be computer proficient.

We need your help in identifying local service providers and women's organizations that should be included in this network. Please contact us directly to make sure we have your organization's information. Effective Tuesday April 11th, you may go to our Web site at www.mass.gov/women/addmyorg.htm to submit your organization's information by filling out an electronic form or call us at (617) 626-6520.

Please note: additional funding will be needed to move this project forward. Anyone wishing to discuss sponsorship opportunities should contact Linda Brantley at the MCSW, (617) 626-6520.

*Did you know, April is
Child Abuse Awareness Month
Sexual Assault Awareness Month and
Victim Rights Awareness Month?
Check the MCSW Web Calendar for Various Events*

MCSW Legislative Updates

On Tuesday, March 14 MCSW's Executive Director Linda Brantley provided testimony before the Financial Services Committee in support of **S673 "An Act to Prohibit Discrimination in Insurance Policies"** and **S619/H2970 "An Act to Provide for the Equitable Coverage in Annuity Policies."** This legislation was first endorsed by the MCSW in 2001 and has been filed every session since.

"An Act to Prohibit Discrimination in Insurance Policies," would protect citizens against discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, marital status or national origin for state regulated policies at the federal level. Passage of this would be the final step in bringing the laws of the Commonwealth into conformity with the Equal Right Amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution.

"An Act Relative to Equitable Coverage in Annuity Policies," would require that state regulated annuity policies sold to residents of Massachusetts be gender-neutral in all the terms and conditions of the contracts, including premiums and benefits.

The MCSW's support of this legislation is consistent with the mission of the Commission, to provide a permanent effective voice for women across the Commonwealth. The Commission believes that this is an issue of fairness and equity. By supporting this legislation, the Commonwealth would show women throughout the state that it is serious in ending gender discrimination in insurance policies.

For more information on MCSW's legislative activity, please e-mail Jill Ashton, Outreach Coordinator at mcsw@state.ma.us or call (617) 626-6520.

MCSW to Establish Statewide Regional Councils

It has been a long time goal of the MCSW to establish Regional Councils to amplify the work of the Commission and to advise Commissioners on region specific issues that affect women. To this end the MCSW plans to establish nine local councils across Massachusetts, which will function as intermediaries between the Commission and their local communities. The MCSW is eager to speak with women about issues that are specific to their regions, with the ultimate goal of developing a plan of action to improve the status of women in the Commonwealth.

The MCSW will launch the Bristol County Council on April 26 in New Bedford.

Women leaders who may be interested in serving the MCSW in this capacity should contact Jill Ashton at (617) 626-6525 or e-mail Jill.Ashton@state.ma.us.

MCSW Participates in The Money Conference for Women

The Money Conference for Women, a project of State Treasurer Timothy P. Cahill, was held at Western New England College in Springfield on Saturday March 31st. The MCSW's Outreach Coordinator Jill Ashton, and the Somerville Women's Commission Executive Director Sonja Daria attended to share information about the work of both Commissions.

The Money Conference for Women is a free event presented by Treasurer Cahill in conjunction with the YWCA New England Regional Council. The program included nationally recognized financial educator Dee Lee, various financial workshops and an opportunity to meet with a financial advisor.

Look for a Money Conference for Women to be held this fall in the Greater Boston Area. For more information, visit the conference Web site: <http://www.themoneyconference.com/home.htm>.

Commission Corner

MCSW to Host MA Women's Commission's Meeting April 11

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women will convene the local Massachusetts women's commissions for its second joint meeting on Tuesday, April 11. These meetings are an opportunity for the Commissions to join with statewide peers, share recent information, and exchange ideas, strategies and challenges. The first joint meeting of the Commissions, held in Worcester in October, proved to be an educational and valuable experience for all in attendance. The MCSW plans to convene the Commissions on a regular basis.

The MCSW looks forward to working collectively with the local Commissions to achieve our common goal of advancing women to full equality in Massachusetts. For additional information, contact the MCSW office at 617-626-6520.

Congratulations to Commissioner Carol Pimentel of New Bedford!

Commissioner Carol Pimentel, Director of Internal Audit and Administrative Services at UMASS Dartmouth, received a 2006 Outstanding Women Awards at UMASS Dartmouth's International Women's Day celebration March 8.

She was nominated by Bruce A. Rose, Asst. Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. In his nomination he noted, "Carol has been an active advocate for women's causes on the UMD campus for more than a decade. Included among her recent accomplishments and contributions are: Member of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women; A prime organizer for Black History Month program for 2006; A prime organizer for the Biannual African/African American Studies Conferences; An active EEO Liaison who has been instrumental in the appointments of many women and people of color; and a relentless supporter and advocate for women students, staff, faculty, and community on a multitude of issues.

"Carol has offered so much service to women in the campus and surrounding community. She has always been known to reach out to women to encourage them to pursue opportunities and believe in themselves; to support them in their struggles, individually and collectively, and to help guide them through these issues to resolution; and to help women to become aware of opportunities, challenges, and issues affecting them. More remarkably, Carol not only employs her advocacy for women staff and students on campus, but throughout her home community, as well," Rose wrote.

The MCSW congratulates Commissioner Pimentel! Well Done!



Berkshire County Commission on the Status of Women Members, standing from left: Pam Malumphy, Chair, Susan Brown, Eleanore Velez. Seated from left, Eve Schatz, MCSW Commissioner Mary Grant, President, MCLA, Mary O'Brien



From left, MCSW ED Linda Brantley, Commissioners Donna Finneran, Kathy Casavant, Lianne Cook, state Representatives Alice Peisch and Mary Grant and Commissioner Roseanna Means.

Upcoming Noteworthy Events & Happenings

⇒ April 8 **The LifeMoxie Women's Economic Power Day - The Key to Having It All!**

For more information, visit www.lifemoxie.com

⇒ April 10 **Jane Doe Inc.'s Voices For Change**

An evening to benefit Jane Doe Inc. To be held at the Park Plaza Hotel, Boston

For more information, visit www.janedoe.org

⇒ April 11, 4:00-7:00 p.m. **Massachusetts Women Commissions Meeting**

To be held at 19 Staniford St., 3rd FL conference Rm. 307C, Boston, MA. To RSVP,

or for more information, call the Commission office at 617-626-6520

⇒ April 26, 3:00-4:30 p.m. **MCSW's Bristol County Regional Council inaugural meeting**

⇒ April 26, 4:30-6:00 p.m. **MCSW Monthly Full Commission Meeting**

To be held at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth • 285 Old Westport Road • North Dartmouth, MA 02747-2300 • Charlton Business School Conference Room, #115 - Park in either Lot 13 or 14

To RSVP, or for more information, call the Commission office at 617-626-6520, or e-mail MCSW

⇒ April 27, 9:00-4:00 p.m. **2006 Victim Rights Conference: "STRENGTH IN UNITY"**

To be held at the Massachusetts State House. To RSVP, or for more information, call the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance at (617) 727-5200.

For a complete listing of events please visit www.mass.gov/women/upcoming.htm



Commission Officers & Members FY 2006

Kathleen Casavant, Chair, Chelsea

Linda Cavaoli, Worcester

Martha Chadwick, Boston

Gloria Coney, Roxbury

Lianne Cook, Salem

Helen Corbett, Danvers

Donna Finneran, Mattapan

Marianne Fleckner, Westford

Mary Grant, PhD, North Adams

Catherine Greene, Esq., Secretary, Brighton

Elizabeth Houlihan, Vice-Chair, Falmouth

Helen Jackson, MD, W. Roxbury

Judith Kurland, Brookline

Roseanna Means, MD, Wellesley

Angela Menino, Hyde Park

Carol Pimentel, New Bedford

Susana Segat, Cambridge

Greer Tan Swiston, Treasurer, Newton

If you have an event that you would like added to our future newsletters, or Web site, please e-mail the information to:

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Paula Daddona, Program Manager

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

VISIT US AT:

WWW.MASS.GOV/WOMEN

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